

Responsible Giving

Dealing with Panhandling



HOUSING DIVISION

When our neighborhoods are safe and thriving, our residents prosper, the local economy grows, and there is a sense of shared pride. We believe that a great neighborhood means opportunities for a diversity of people at all income levels to live and grow, neighbors knowing and supporting each other, and residents, business owners, and the City, working as partners to enhance the quality of life.



The growing homeless population is a tragic statement of our current economic environment but must also be balanced with a City's responsibility to provide a safe, clean and pleasant living environment for all.

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There is rarely a time that we venture out in our vehicles without seeing panhandling activities. Most of us want to give. It just becomes a matter of how best to give, when it's most helpful and will it matter. Here are some best practices for compassionate and responsible giving.

1. Think twice before giving money

Sometimes your well-intended spare change and cash is used for alcohol or drugs and not for food or other basic needs. Offering money may even encourage more panhandling and enable their current lifestyle. There are alternative ways to give.

Alternative Ways to Give

Sometimes you have to follow your heart and conscience. Give according to your own conscience, but do so with a better understanding of the issues surrounding the problem. Instead of money, think about these alternative gifts:

- Keep fast food gift cards on hand to give out to those that may be hungry.
- Keep a supply of water, granola bars, and other snacks in your car to hand out.
- Give out a pair of socks.
- Pack a little plastic sandwich bag with travel size toiletries (shampoo, soap, toothpaste, toothbrush, etc.).

2. Acknowledge the person with respect

Maybe you don't have any items to give, a smile or a quick hello from a passerby is rare. Taking the time to be friendly and respectful gives others a sense of civility and dignity.

3. Encourage them to get help

Carry pocket resource guides that list services available to those in need. These resource guides are a compassionate and sensible response that connects them to organizations/agencies that can help. The South Bay Homeless Advocacy Coalition provides a [Pocket Resource Guide](#).

4. Give to an organization and not a panhandler

Contribute to local charities, missions, food banks or social service organizations that assist the needy and help them get back on their feet. The [Pocket Resource Guide](#) provided by the South Bay Homeless Advocacy Coalition is a good place to start for some of our local organizations helping those in need.